After Hair Transplantation Surgery

Care instructions

After Surgery

- Right after surgery, plan to go home and rest until the next morning.
- To help decrease swelling, sleep with your head elevated at a 45-degree angle for 1 to 3 nights after surgery.
- DO NOT use any aspirin-containing products or drink alcohol for 5 days after surgery.

Bleeding

- Bleeding may occur the night after surgery or up to a few days after. This almost always stops if you apply firm, steady pressure over the area for 15 minutes. Do this without lifting the gauze to "check" before the time is up, so as not to dislodge the surrounding grafts.
- If you cannot control the bleeding with rest and pressure, you may reach Dr. Berg or the resident on-call through the paging operator at 206-598-6190.

Pain Control

- Many people require medication the first 1 to 2 nights after surgery. The medication should control your discomfort.
- You will have been given a prescription for Tylenol #3 or Percocet for pain control. Use the pain medicine as directed.
Wound Care

- You will be given supplies to help take care of your scalp:
  - **A spray bottle with sterile saline solution** – Use the saline solution daily for the next 3 days after the surgery. Wet 2 to 3 pieces of gauze with saline solution and apply them on the transplanted area for 30 to 60 minutes twice daily. This will keep the transplanted area moist and will help speed the healing process.
  - **Polysporin, Bacitracin, or Aquaphor ointment** – Apply ointment 2 times a day to the recipient site (in the back) to keep the site from drying out. Using ointment or K-Y water-soluble gel will help reduce crusting.
  - **Sterile gauze** – Use the gauze to apply gentle pressure to any areas that bleed lightly the day of the surgery or in the next few days. If the bleeding is from the donor area, lift the hair before applying pressure to avoid matting down the hair.

- In the first 1 to 3 days, a crust or even a graft may occasionally be knocked or combed out. Do not panic. It is uncommon and even if it happens, it is rare to lose more than a few hair roots this way.

Swelling

- Swelling may occur, especially after your first transplant. The swelling is usually on the forehead and often starts about 2 to 4 days after surgery. The swelling may descend to the eyelids and may even cause black eyes. This is rare. In time, all of the swelling will resolve.

- Swelling can be minimized by:
  - Sleeping with your head elevated at a 45-degree angle for 1 to 3 nights after surgery, using a recliner or pillows.
  - Apply icepacks (or bags of frozen peas) around the forehead and temples. Do NOT apply ice directly to the hair plugs.

Infection

- Infection is rare.

- To reduce the chance of infection, touch the donor area or the transplanted grafts only with clean hands.

- Avoid exposure to dirt in the air for 2 weeks after surgery.

- Report any increasing tenderness or redness and swelling around the surgical site.
Exercise and Work

- Refrain from heavy work or sports for 1 week.
- Refrain from heavy lifting or weight lifting for 2 weeks.
- Some people return to light work the day after surgery, although most people prefer to take at least 2 to 5 days off, because of the possibility of swelling and some crusting after surgery. Crusting will be more visible if you have little hair to begin with. Crusts usually fall off in about 7 to 10 days after surgery.

Hair Washing and Hair Care

- On the day after surgery, you may wash your hair gently in the shower. Try not to let the water beat directly onto the recipient area where the grafts are, until the crusts are gone. You may want to have a cup in the shower to help rinse the graft sites.
- You can gently touch the grafts with your fingertips while washing in the shower 3 days after surgery. Avoid catching the grafts with your fingernails.
- Hairspray and mousse can be used 1 week after the transplant, but should be washed off daily.
- Comb with care to avoid dislodging the grafts.
- Avoid hair dryers for 1 to 2 weeks.
- Hair can be colored, permed, or cut once all the crusts have fallen off.

Sutures

- Sutures will be removed from the donor area about 14 days after surgery.

Crusting

- Crusts will usually fall off in about 7 to 10 days. Sometimes, they take a little longer to fall off.
- Aquaphor, Bacitracin or Polysporin ointment can be applied to try and soften the crusts if they are prominent. Ointments are greasy, so you may want to try KY water-soluble gel instead.
Follow-up Visit

- We will call you the day after your procedure to find out if you need to be seen in the clinic (many patients do not).
- Sutures will be removed from the donor site in 2 weeks.
- We ask to see you 6 months after the surgery. Note that the hair will not be fully growing by then.
- We ask to see you again 1 year after surgery to assess the final results of the transplant.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC clinic staff are also available to help at any time.

The Dermatologic Surgery Center is open Monday through Thursday, 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

- To speak to a nurse during clinic hours, call 206-598-4301.
- To speak with someone when the clinic is closed, call 206-598-6190 and ask to page the Dermatologic Surgery Resident on-call.
- To schedule or change a clinic visit in the Dermatologic Surgery Center, call 206-598-6647.
- To schedule or change a surgery appointment, call 206-598-7895.